

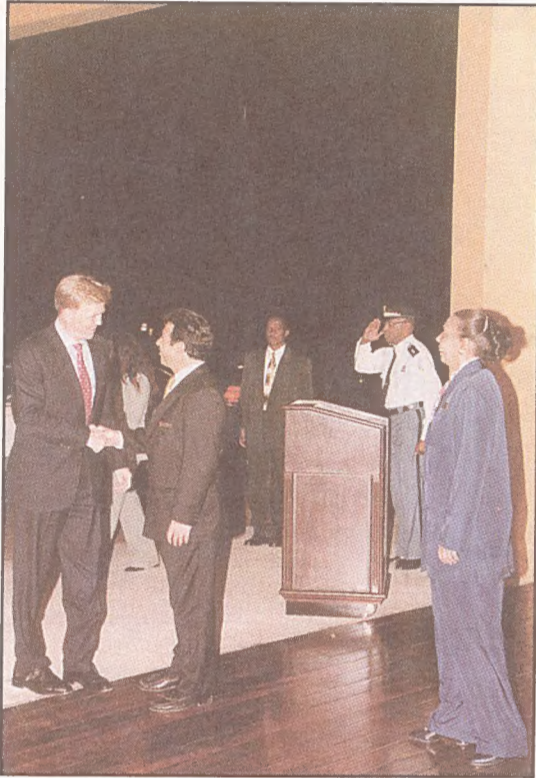


The News



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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Willem Alexander on one day visit to Aruba



The lobby at the Radisson Aruba Caribbean Resort and Casino was bustling with activity last night, as the resort's management, staffers, guests, media and quite a few members of the special security unit of the

Police Corps got in line to welcome Aruba's most distinguished guest expected to visit the island this year. The much anticipated guest is the Crown Prince of The Netherlands, His Royal

Highness Prince Willem Alexander, who arrived late last night on the island for a one-day work visit. His schedule took him all over the island during the day. He started his morning with a visit to the Governor, His Excellency Mr. Olindo Koolman, whereafter he visited the Parliament. The official opening by Prince Willem Alexander of the "Schutterij" Civic Guard museum, commemorating Aruba's role in WWII, was followed by a stop at the Olympic Pool in Savaneta where he received

information on the School Swimming project; and lunch at Brisas del Mar. From there his working visit took him to the Coastal Refinery for a tour. He then made a stop at the San Nicolas Sportcentrum for talks on youth and sport; and closed off his busy afternoon with a visit to the Dutch Marines Base in Savaneta. This evening, Prince Willem Alexander is the guest of honor at a reception offered by Prime Minister Henny Eman at Fort Zoutman. The Prince leaves Aruba for Curaçao tomorrow morning at 10:15. NEWS photos show the arrival of His Royal Highness at the Radisson Resort where he

was welcomed to "his home" on Aruba by General Manager Jeff Lesker and executive Lili Polsbroek; and his visit to the Schutterij Museum. Photos depict the unveiling of the monument by Prince Willem Alexander; the Guard of Honor; the children choir under guidance of Mrs. Maybeline Arends-Croes who sang the Schutterij song; the laying of a wreath by one of the members of the 1940-1945 Civic Guard, Mr. Victor Winklaar Sr. and Mr. Nicky Ecury, brother of Aruban war hero Boy Ecury; and the Prince admiring a souvenir poster on the life of Boy Ecury, presented to him by master Jonathan Schouten, great-nephew of Mr. Boy Ecury.

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Annan says AIDS drugs agreement needs big finan- cial support

UNITED NATIONS, New York (AFP) - UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called today for a global fund to enable developing countries to put in place the infrastructure necessary to bring cheap generic drugs to AIDS sufferers.

"Availability of the drugs alone is not sufficient," he told reporters. "We need to do much more."

Annan played a key role in persuading 39 international pharmaceutical companies to drop a lawsuit to prevent the South African government from importing copies of patented anti-retroviral drugs.

The secretary general met representatives of six international drug firms in Amsterdam April 5 and told them their lawsuit against South Africa was neither in the best interests of people living with HIV/AIDS nor of the firms themselves.

The companies' decision, announced at the High Court in Pretoria on Thursday, is expected to set a precedent for other countries, such as Brazil, India and Thailand, which manufacture copies of such drugs.

But South African Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang told a press conference the drugs would still be too expensive.

"They are not affordable as far as we are concerned," she said.

Leaders from across the Americas meet, activists prepare to protest

QUEBEC CITY, Canada (AFP) - Leaders from North, Central and South America were meeting privately today in a sealed-off section of the city as thousands of protestors readied to rally against their weekend summit with a focus on planned pan-American free trade.

Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Argentine President Fernando de la Rúa, who later met with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez, held bilateral talks here early today ahead of the third Summit of the Americas' official opening ceremony.

US President George W. Bush, who arrived here at midday, will be making his first impression on most of the region's leaders, with many of whom he plans to hold separate bilateral meetings.

Today, Bush meets first with summit host Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien; then leaders of five Andean nations, Brazil and Panama; 14 Caribbean leaders; and Central American leaders.

The leaders are hoping to get a sense of whether the new US leader can pull off secur-

ing trade promotion authority -- formerly known as "fast-track" -- in the US Congress.

The authority would bind lawmakers to a yes-or-no vote on any commercial deal Bush signs, including a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) that leaders will be discussing here.

Without it, an FTAA plan could be subject to the differing agendas of members of the US Congress.

Twenty-one presidents and 13 prime ministers -- excluding Cuba -- are gathering for the third Summit of the Americas to discuss trade, democracy, technology access and social issues, and assess progress toward a pan-American trade pact.

Leaders agreed to negotiate an FTAA at the first Summit of the Americas in 1994 in Miami, and many view the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico and the United States as the cornerstone for a Canada-down-to-Chile pact.

Pro-labor, environmental and student activists converging here cite NAFTA as evidence of the flawed strategy

behind the proposed FTAA, which would see trade barriers eliminated by a target date of 2005.

They say hundreds of thousands of jobs have been eliminated in Canada and the United States, while a gain in Mexican jobs has not resulted in a higher standard of living for those working at export assembly plants, or "maquiladoras", along the US border.

On Thursday, 6,000 police, on hand for the summit, surprised activists by closing a 3.8-kilometer (2.4 mile), three-meter (10-foot) high wire fence standing on concrete blocks hours ahead of schedule to the jeers of on-lookers.

This provincial city became a virtual ghost town inside the perimeter, with only delegation officials, journalists or security officers milling about.

Outside the perimeter, at least 1,000 protestors marched from Laval University here through the streets of the nearly 400-year-old town late Thursday.

No confrontations were reported.

US ship heads to Cuba on landmark direct service

MIAMI, Florida (AFP) - A US ship owned by Florida's Crowley Liner Services will arrive in Havana Saturday bearing a load of humanitarian donations on the first direct service between the two neighboring countries in decades, a company spokesman said today.

The shipment on the Jacksonville-based vessel, which also includes some specially licensed US food and medicine exports as now allowed under US law, will mark the "first (direct) shipping service in decades linking the two countries," Crowley spokesman Mark Miller said.

The United States has had an economic embargo clamped on Havana for four decades.

Last October then-president Bill Clinton signed legislation allowing US foods and medical goods to be exported to Cuba under special license. The company spokesman said the service from Florida to Cuba may be made weekly.

Despite the new development, reflecting a policy move by the Clinton administration, there has been no sign President George W. Bush's new administration will review its

conservative stand on US policy toward Cuba, the only communist-ruled country in the Americas.

The Crowley spokesman's remarks came just as Bush departed Washington for the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, to meet with 33 other heads of state and government from across the region to discuss a planned Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA).

The only country shut out of the summit process is Cuba which has criticized the United States for what it calls efforts to institutionalize its economic dominance.

Cuba also has voiced concern and disbelief at Bush's choice of a staunchly anti-communist Cuban-American as the top US diplomat steering relations with Latin America, the Caribbean and Canada.

If approved as assistant secretary of state for western hemispheric affairs, Bush's Cuban-born pick Otto Reich, 55, a former US ambassador to Venezuela, would oversee Washington's foreign policy in a region undergoing some democratic political strain and sweeping economic change.